



NASAO 2005 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

March 2005

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Guam
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

NASAO, the voice of the state government aviation agencies which represent the public interest in all 50 states, Guam and Puerto Rico, is deeply concerned that the administration's proposed 2006 budget would greatly damage our nation's vitally important transportation infrastructure by drastically cutting the wise investments already authorized by Congress in VISION 100. We know that Congress realizes that 10 percent of our economy is directly tied to aviation and that it fully appreciates the importance of aviation to our nation's strength, security and sense of well being. NASAO's members look forward to working with Members of Congress on a 2006 aviation budget that will keep the promises made in VISION 100 and maintain the strength and vitality of America's aviation system.

AIP MUST BE FULLY FUNDED AT THE AUTHORIZED LEVEL OF \$3.6 BILLION FOR 2006.

The administration proposes to cut \$600 Million from the VISION 100 promise. All facets of air commerce including commercial airline enplanements, business and recreational aviation, charters and air cargo are growing. The General Aviation Manufacturers Association recently reported a strong surge in new aircraft deliveries including increases in business jets, turboprops and piston engine powered aircraft. Collectively, these developments place additional pressure on the system. Our nation's airports and air traffic control system are facing renewed traffic levels by both General Aviation and the commercial airlines that are beginning to exceed those in existence prior to 9/11. Some major airports are already facing capacity constraints. Without continued investment in upgrades of aviation infrastructure, we will quickly see a return of the costly delays, constraints, cancellations and consumer complaints that plagued the summer of 2000. We must not break the promises of VISION 100 and dramatically scale back important infrastructure investments.

GENERAL AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS MUST NOT BE ERODED. General Aviation has proven to be a powerful economic engine for community development and a genuine national resource. But, the administration's proposed budget would be particularly harmful to our nation's General Aviation airports. The number of General Aviation aircraft is increasing and exciting new small business jets and personal aircraft are under development. Our public use airports are already under increasing pressure to maintain current safety standards while trying to keep pace with challenges imposed by new generation aircraft. The concept of "fractional-ownership" is bringing the advantages of General Aviation to more businesses and people and the utilization of aircraft is increasing. Yet this budget would eliminate the current General Aviation Entitlement program of \$150,000 for each of the nation's smallest airports. Also, the traditional set-aside for General Aviation and non-primary airports is reduced to 18.5 percent from the current 20%. The administration's proposal also ignores the needs of the highly successful FAA Contract Tower Program which serves 226 airports in 46 states. NASAO asks Congress to maintain full funding for all these important programs.

THE ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE PROGRAM MUST BE FULLY FUNDED IN 2006 (AT LEAST \$113 MILLION) AND THE SMALL COMMUNITY AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MUST NOT BE ELIMINATED (AUTHORIZED AT \$35 MILLION). Fully understanding that air service is one of the essential ties that bind our vast nation together, Congress wisely and regularly invested in both of these programs. Now, the administration seeks to cut EAS in half and eliminate the highly productive Small Community Air Service Development Program. Without any study or evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs, these cuts are premature. This proposal will have a devastating effect on many of our rural communities.

(MORE)

THE 109TH CONGRESS SHOULD ESTABLISH A NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SMALL COMMUNITY AIR SERVICE.

Section 411 of VISION 100 provided for a 9-member commission to study rural air service and to report back to Congress within 6 months on how to improve the ability of small communities to attract, retain and enhance air service. Unfortunately, the commission was never appointed, staffed or funded (authorized at \$250,000). NASAO believes that such a commission would be able to finally provide expert guidance on what level of federal government involvement and funding is necessary at a minimum. NASAO strongly urges Members of Congress to establish such a commission and to reject any attempts to cut funding to these two programs until a commission has had an opportunity to examine and evaluate existing programs and the needs of rural communities and make its recommendations to Congress.

FAA FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT BUDGET MUST BE FULLY FUNDED. The administration proposes to cut \$77 million from the FAA F&E budget. The F&E budget complements AIP by enhancing flight safety and assuring maximum utility of our nation's public-use airports. With FAA facing continuing and growing demands with aging equipment and increased system use, this is not the time to short-change this critical investment.

CONGRESS DESIGNED AIP TO BUILD RUNWAYS, INVEST IN NAVIGATIONAL AIDS, ENHANCE SAFETY AND CAPACITY - - NOT TO PAY FOR FAA OPERATIONS. NASAO notes that the administration proposes to increase the FAA Operations account to \$8.201 Billion (an increase of \$312 more than authorized and \$448 million more than Congress appropriated last year). While NASAO does not necessarily oppose greater funding for FAA Ops, it does not believe that such finding should come from the Trust Fund. The AIP Trust Fund is directly supported by efficient General Aviation fuel taxes, commercial airline passenger ticket taxes and cargo taxes. These funds should only be directly invested in infrastructure improvements.

STATE AVIATION OFFICIALS LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH CONGRESS TO IMPROVE OUR AVIATION SYSTEM WHILE MAXIMIZING OUR RETURN ON THE FEDERAL INVESTMENT. The invaluable and finite federal investment from AIP is critically important to the ability of state government aviation agencies to address the significant needs of our nation's aviation infrastructure. NASAO members develop and implement state airport priority lists, state aviation capital improvement plans, airport pavement maintenance programs, noise compatibility studies, aviation system plans and a wide variety of other programs and tools to guide sound and appropriate investments in aviation infrastructure. Earmarking can play a positive role in the process or earmarking which is incompatible with these existing planning tools can erode the ability of states to effectively address significant infrastructure needs. NASAO's members stand ready to assist their federal delegations in choosing sites where federal investments will bring the best return on investments and look forward to working with their respective delegations to ensure that these crucial needs are met in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

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